
OLR Bill Analysis

sHB 6690

AN ACT CONCERNING COURT PROCEEDINGS AND THE PROTECTION OF ANIMALS.

SUMMARY:

This bill allows judges to appoint a volunteer to advocate for the best interests of an animal in a civil or criminal proceeding related to animal cruelty or fighting that affects the welfare or custody of the animal. The bill makes the agriculture commissioner responsible for maintaining a list of volunteer advocates with animal welfare or legal advocacy expertise and specifies their qualifications and responsibilities.

EFFECTIVE DATE: July 1, 2013

APPOINTMENT, QUALIFICATIONS, AND DUTIES

A court must appoint an animal advocate from the commissioner's list upon (1) the request of either party's attorney or (2) its own order. Animal advocates must be knowledgeable about the needs and protection of animals and relevant court procedures, but they need not be attorneys. The commissioner's list may include law school students and faculty as well as attorneys.

Animal advocates are responsible for conducting an independent investigation of the case and presenting information on the best interests of the animal to the court. Advocates may be cross-examined. As part of an investigation, advocates must consider:

1. prior arrangements made for the animal, including a trust for the care of the animal and
2. any restraining or protective order that contains a provision protecting the animal.

The bill does not address whether an animal advocate may represent more than one animal in the same proceeding.

COMMITTEE ACTION

Judiciary Committee

Joint Favorable Substitute

Yea 38 Nay 6 (04/16/2013)